



THIS WEEK IN IRAQ



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Top Stories



**Iraqi Police
taking to the
streets,
Page 3**

**Sailor breaks
world record,
Page 5**



**The military
workhorse,
Page 10**



**Soldiers,
cement and
insurgents
Page 12**



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron Allmon

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Patrick Vankirk, from 1st Armored Division's 1st Brigade, helps a young Iraqi boy try on a new shirt during a patrol Tuesday.

Iraqi Freedom Day

BAGHDAD — Iraqis observed the third annual Iraqi Freedom Day and recalled the dramatic pulling down of a huge Saddam Hussein statue.

Three years ago, April 9, 2003, Iraqis and U.S. Marines toppled a giant statue of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad's Firdos Square. It became a symbol of a new, free Iraq.

In a joint statement, U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and Multi-National Force - Iraq Commander Gen. George Casey celebrated the third anniversary of Iraqi Freedom Day, addressing the historic toppling of Saddam's statue.

"This act was not just symbolic," they said. "It signaled the beginning of a fledgling democracy that continues to mature. During the past year alone, Iraqis have elected a Constitutional government, drafted and ratified a constitution and held successful elections for their new national

assembly. Through 2005, more and more Iraqis decided to engage in building the new Iraq, culminating in almost 75 percent of registered voters casting ballots in December's election."

Khalilzad and Casey continued, "Iraqi Freedom Day is a time to reflect on what has happened, and what still needs to happen. Despite much progress, much work remains. We must continue to help Iraqis create a strong, stable and successful new democracy. The Iraqi people and their elected representatives must choose a competent government that will develop a program for Iraq that benefits all Iraqis."

"The United States and its Coalition partners will remain steadfast partners and encourage progress," the statement read. "In the end, Iraq will succeed. Its success will help transform the wider Middle East and give even greater meaning to Iraqi Freedom Day."

GENERAL CASEY'S CORNER**Eyes on the new gov't**

Last week saw maneuvers by many sides in Iraq and the Coalition to help form a unity government. There is talk that the next Council of Representatives will meet Wednesday. It is a positive move. When they meet, the speaker and deputy speaker of the CoR will be selected, with potential to nominate the president and two vice presidents, making up the presidency counsel.

One of the major stumbling points in the formation of the current government is the selection of the prime minister. There is talk the current nominee, Prime Minister Ja'afari may step aside for a candidate more representative of a unity government. Iraqis need a prime minister who can unify Iraq and, given the problems of the country, somebody who is competent at leading the nation. Regardless of who Iraqis ultimately nominate, the point to remember is that they are talking, negotiating, compromising and coming to a decision for the future of their country.

Who that person will be is an Iraqi decision. However, this is not a decision that needs to be made quickly and poorly. There needs to be thoughtful consideration for the next four years. As Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said recently, we do not want the Iraqis, "...to make the wrong decisions just to have ministers and a prime minister that cannot do the job, but to get a good strong government, a competent government as soon as possible."

The urgency for that decision manifested itself again Friday when mul-

By Gen. George W. Casey
Multi-National Force - Iraq
Commanding General



tiple suicide bombers detonated bombs at the Buratha Mosque in Kadamiyah. While the bombings resulted in no structural damage to the mosque, about 75 Iraqis were killed and 135 wounded.

Reporting indicated there were three male suicide bombers on the inside and one female suicide bomber on the outside of the Shiite mosque, a profile that matches tried and true al-Qaida in Iraq terror techniques.

Again, the people of Iraq saw the attack for what it was - the latest attempt to foment sectarian violence in Iraq. Much to their credit they did not panic. However, as long as there is a lull in the formation of the government, and perceived vulnerability, the terrorists and those wanting to take advantage of the situation for revenge will use this time for violence.

Sunday marked the 3rd anniversary of Iraqi Freedom Day, a day that signifies when Iraqis were freed from the shackles of tyranny after more than three decades. The formation of

Regardless of who the Iraqi political blocs ultimately nominate, the point to remember is that the Iraqis are talking, negotiating and compromising and coming to a decision for the future of their country

a government will not only help to greatly diminish these opportunistic attacks, but serve to validate the courage of the people of Iraq and the members of the Iraqi Security Forces and the Coalition Security Forces who made freedom possible then and now.

Photos around the Fertile Crescent

Spc. James Kalkstein, 101st Airborne Division, looks at a map showing the area of an operation in Beiji.



Cpl. Guage Krein, 324th Psychological Operations Company, repairs a wheel on a 5-ton truck at COB Speicher.



U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Jacob Balma, a dentist with the 506th Expeditionary Medical Squadron, gives an Airman a checkup and cleaning at Kirkuk Regional Air Base.



A U.S. Soldier from the 320th Field Artillery Regiment drives a post into the ground while setting up a checkpoint in Monfia.

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Emergency Services Units patrol the streets of Beiji during a sweep of the city that involved more than 400 personnel. The sweep netted 25 suspected insurgents and criminals.

Elite police units on duty in Beiji

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Russell Lee Klika
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BEIJI — More than 400 Iraqi Security personnel conducted an independent operation in Beiji and the surrounding villages of northern Salah Ad Din Province to rid the area of criminals and insurgents.

The operation was one of the first solely planned and executed by Iraqi Security Forces. The Provincial Police Chief Maj. Gen. Hamid and other Iraqi Security leadership directed the operation with Coalition Forces taking up perimeter security role.

The operation kicked off Tuesday morning with Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division's 1/187th Infantry Regiment and the 4th Iraqi Army Division providing checkpoints around the outskirts of the city. Two elite special police battalions, known as Emergency Services Units, then swept through the area along with members of the provincial Iraqi Police.

"We came out with the Iraqi Army," said 1st Lt. Scott Thornburry of Lubock, Texas, a platoon leader for Co. A, 1/187th Inf. Reg. "We are setting up blocking positions...all

the way around Beiji. We are allowing the ESU units....to conduct raids within the city and hopefully round up some bad guys."

The ESUs began by searching two villages south of Beiji during the early morning hours and later entered the city. Morning searches detained 16 suspected insurgents, including one former colonel in Saddam Hussein's Army and three henchmen connected to one of Beiji's most wanted criminals. Later, the cities of Suniyah and Suliyah were searched netting nine more suspects.

"As we came in they were everywhere," said Capt. Michael Starz, the assistant operations officer for the 187th Inf. Regt. "You couldn't turn the street without seeing one of these guys [ESU] stopped in a blocking position. [This was] a very effective operation and we are excited to see the results from it. We know that two pretty bad guys that were directly tied to killing four of our Soldiers were caught. We have been look-

ing for them since November."

During the day, Iraqi Soldiers running a checkpoint detained four oil tankers and drivers suspected of hauling black market fuel. They had no documentation on the fuel they were carrying as they tried to leave the city.

"As we came in they were everywhere."

The operation is a significant step towards establishing self-sufficient security operations for the Iraqi Security Forces in the Salah

Ad Din Province. In all, 25 insurgents were detained and transferred to Tikrit for questioning, along with the four suspected black market fuel traffickers.

"They maintained operational security," said Starz. "They hit time on target exactly... [and] they caught guys they said they were going to catch."

"We are excited to see this kind of progress," he said. "ISF running around the battlefield,...[engaging] the enemy, developing their own intelligence, [and] operating like you would expect a country to have its forces operating."

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Members of the Beiji Security Council meet to discuss security issues and ways to use all available agencies to combat problems.

City security council finds holes

Story and photos by
Capt. Amy A. Bishop
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BEIJI — The newly formed Beiji Security Council is coming together to discuss ways to solve security problems in the city.

The Security Council was created to coordinate the efforts of the Iraqi security agencies, Coalition Forces and local leaders. Joint meetings allow them to share information and participate in planning efforts ensuring the safety and security the Beiji citizens.

Areas of security under discussion by the council are not only from Beiji, but also surrounding villages. Several agencies are involved including Iraqi Police chiefs, the commander of the local Iraqi Army battalion, members of the five different strategic infrastructure battalions, the highway patrol, the internal infrastructure security leaders from the local chemical plant, oil refinery and power station and the head of the Joint Communications Center.

The Joint Communi-

cations Center, Iraq's version of a 911 center, acts as a central reporting hub for all significant activities relating to security.

The meetings are also used to spread the word about positive aspects of community life, such as completed projects and improved conditions in Beiji. Recently, Coalition Forces presented two new ambulances to the members of the council. One is to be used by the local hospital and the other for a nearby aid station in a village to the south of the city.

Things are getting done in Beiji and things are getting better said Capt. Scott Goehring, a civil affairs officer with the 445th Civil Affairs Battalion.

Goehring said that the meetings are helping the agencies work together and improve the security for the city.

"When we started with this they never talked to each other at all. Now they are talking and working together," he said.



Worker from the city of Beiji comes out to the Security Council meeting to pick up the new ambulance being presented to the city before the meeting.



Athlete of the Week

Sailor breaks world record on treadmill

Story and Photo by
Senior Airman Mark Woodbury
Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq,
Public Affairs Office

BAGHDAD — At 5 feet 9 inches and 190 pounds, U.S. Navy Lt. Buck Herdegen is built more like an Abrams tank than a Ferrari, but his stocky frame broke a world speed record, covering 50 kilometers on a treadmill in 3 hours, 38 minutes and 6 seconds.

Herdegen, who has worked with the Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq for the past six months, got the idea from his younger brother, also assigned to the command.

"(My brother) was reading an article on the Internet one day about Geoff Weber, a Navy lieutenant, who had set a new world record by running 50K on a treadmill in 3:41:53," said Herdegen. "So, he turned to me and said, 'You can do that can't you?'"

Being the older brother, Herdegen said he couldn't let his little brother down. Two weeks later he was running for the record.

"I really wasn't at all sure that I could do it, but I had been doing a lot of running on the treadmill so it seemed at least possible," said Herdegen.

The Utah native, had already been train-

ing during his free time for the Salt Lake City Marathon to help raise money for the Huntsman Cancer Institute - a goal he set to pay tribute to his mother who is a cancer survivor. After contacting Guinness World Records, Herdegen ran head-first toward his new mark.

During the record-setting run, the first 42 kilometers went smoothly, covering the marathon distance in a little less than three hours, said Herdegen. But after that milestone things began getting a little more difficult.

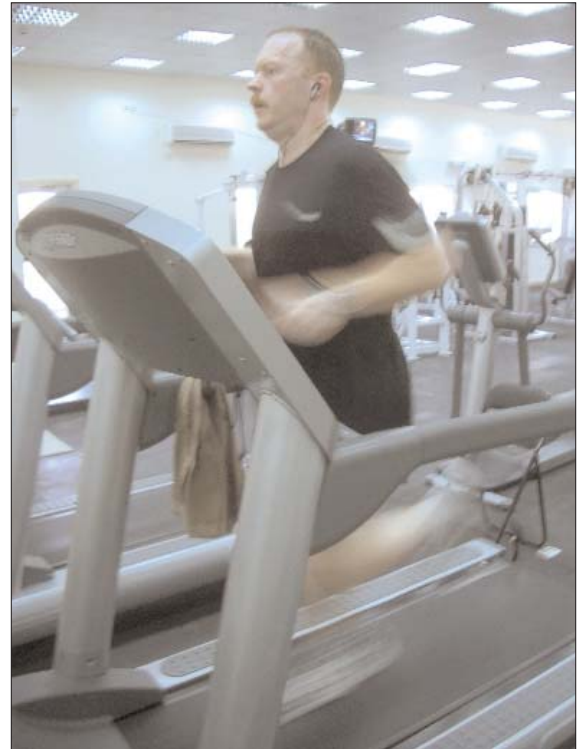
"I hit the wall at 43K," Herdegen recalls. "I was well ahead of the record at that point, but I had started out too fast and I needed a break to catch my breath. It's one of those moments when even though there's plenty of air around you, you feel like you can't get enough oxygen."

After a short break, Herdegen stepped back onto the treadmill, at a little slower pace this time.

"It felt like it took forever to cover those last seven kilometers," he said. "I wanted to stop with literally every step, but I could see that the record was still within reach if I just kept moving."

During the run the gym began to fill up with spectators who came to see if he would actually break the record.

"I wasn't aware of how many people had come until I finished and turned around," Herdegen said. "Many people had stopped by during my run to offer encouragement, and I could see out of the



Lt. Buck Herdegen during his record-setting 50 kilometer run in Baghdad.

corner of my eye there were a few people off to the side as I was grinding out those last few kilometers."

As it got down to the last kilometer, he said he could see that the record was his if he could just keep the pace for another five minutes.

"I was conscious of how quiet it had become," he said.

"I was half expecting someone to say something encouraging but dreading it at the same time because I knew I didn't have any more to give."

He said crowd must have sensed just how weary he was because they were absolutely silent until he had broken the record. Once broken, the crowd erupted into cheering and clapping all around him.

"It was very gratifying," he said.

3: 38: 06

Engineers lead way for Tikrit courthouse

TIKRIT — The Tikrit courthouse, which serves more than 100,000 people in the capital of the Salah ad Din Province, underwent a facelift.

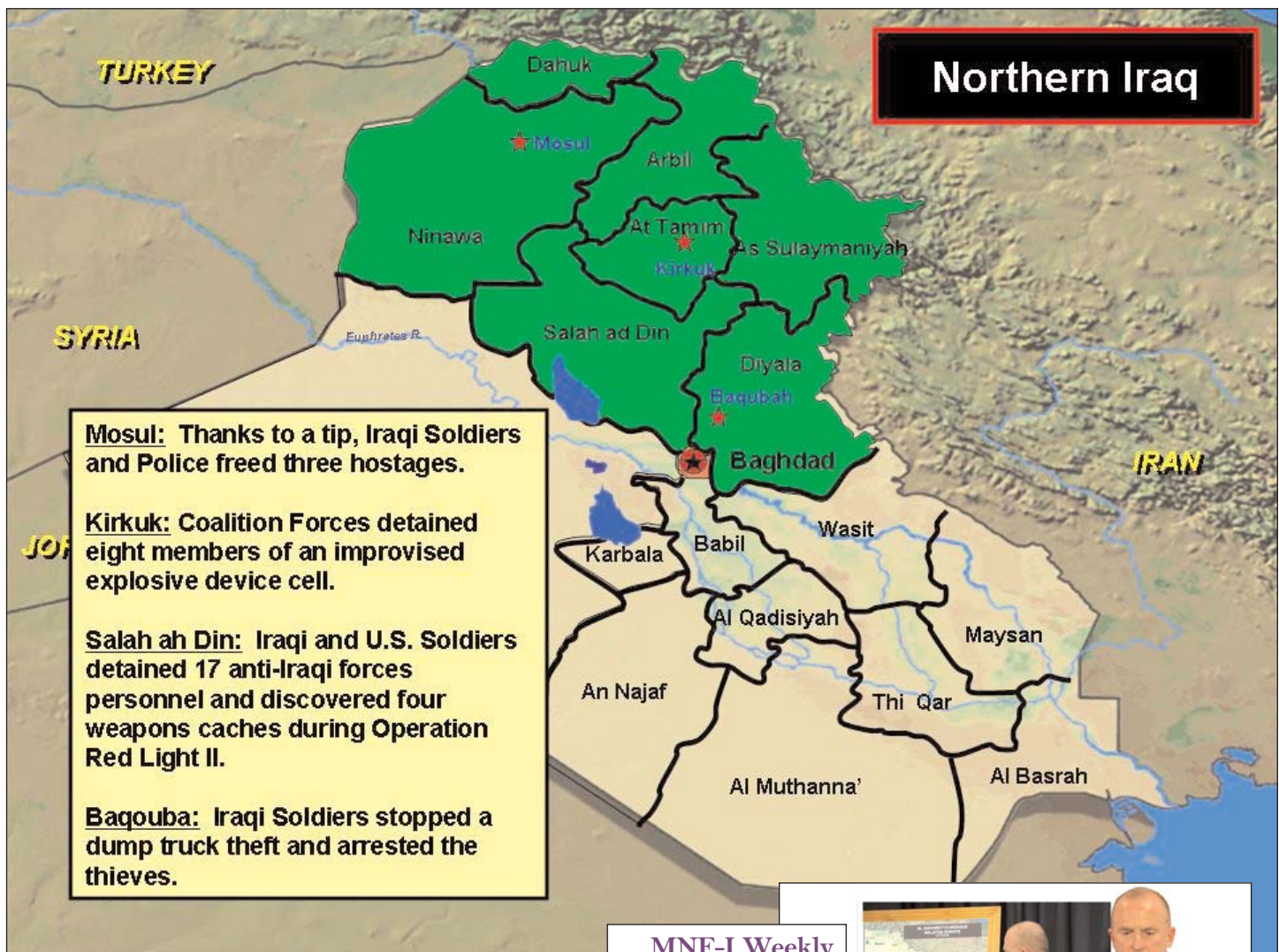
The courthouse renovation was managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Workers rewired the old building, installing electrical and computer lines and built an annex with a reception area, restrooms and office spaces.

"This has been a rewarding project," said Chris Nelsen, the USACE project engineer in. The project was an opportunity to work closely with an Iraqi contractor and help teach him the importance of planning, quality control, and project management.

"These tools will help him on future projects."

Work is complete on the Al Fathah River Crossing Project, which connects crude oil, liquid petroleum gas and natural gas distribution lines from the northern oil fields to the Beiji Refinery. There, Iraqis produce petroleum products to export via the Iraq-Turkey Pipeline.



Soldiers uncovered a weapons cache four miles west of Baghdad near the village of Shohada.

Acting on an Iraqi citizen's tip, Soldiers conducted a search of the area and discovered a buried cache.

Tips from Iraqis have significantly increased in the Abu Ghraib area over the last week. The results of this cache find are listed below:

- 1 Suicide vest
- 1 Medium machine gun
- 3 RPG launchers
- 3 60mm Mortar systems
- 8 82mm Mortar rounds
- 6 1/4 pound TNT sticks
- 2 Katusha rockets
- 8 RPG rounds with boosters
- 5 Motorola handheld radios
- Dozens of blasting caps
- Circuit boards for building IEDs
- Explosive detonation cord
- Several small homemade explosives

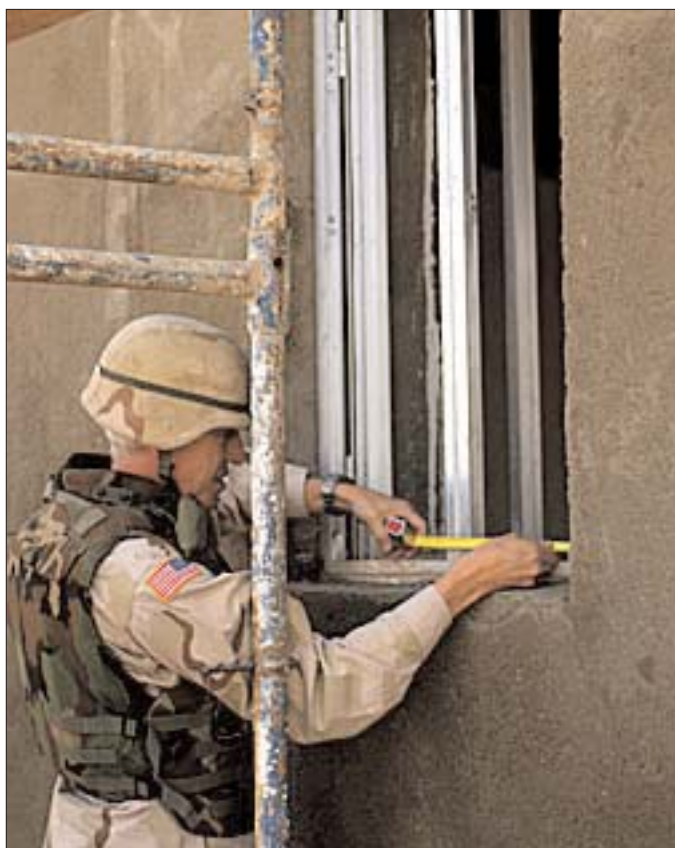


MNF-I Weekly Press Conference



Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch
MNF-I Spokesman





Barry Stuard, an engineer with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, measures a window at the new 8th Iraqi Army Division barracks.



Alsace Dyer, an engineer with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, shakes hands with local Iraqis after inspecting the Salahiyah Road construction site.

Rebuilding Diwaniyah

Photos by Senior Airman Jason T. Bailey



Iraqi workers mix mortar that will be used in building the barracks.



Iraqi workers lift mortar to the roof of the new 8th Iraqi Army Division barracks in Diwaniyah.

Insurgents try strike; Coalition responds

Story by Sgt. Kristopher Joseph
Multi-National Corps-Iraq Public Affairs Office

Marines fighting back

Using laser-guided bombs, anti-tank rockets and machine guns, U.S. forces fended off a coordinated insurgent assault Saturday on the provincial governor's office in Ramadi.

Insurgents launched the sustained attack from several directions midday on the Government Center, said Capt. Andrew Del Gaudio, commander of 8th Marine Regiment's Company K, 3rd Battalion. A sandbag-lined building protected by U.S. Marines serves as government headquarters for Anbar province.

During the fighting, insurgents took up positions in several destroyed buildings and a nearby mosque, firing at least half a dozen rocket-propelled grenades at U.S. observation posts on the government building. Insurgents also attacked a U.S. sniper team nearby and fired mortars at U.S. positions.

Marines have not searched the area to make an exact body count. There were no Marine casualties, Del Gaudio said.

Breaking the chains

A citizen's tip led Soldiers from the 2nd Iraqi Army Division's 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, and Iraqi Police to a house in Mosul. The combined force entered the house and found three Iraqis chained to the wall of the basement. The Soldiers freed the hostages and no one was injured during the rescue.

Recent tips from Iraqi civilians have led to the discovery of kidnap victims, suspected terrorists and weapons caches and have shown the increased trust and confidence in the security forces around northern Iraq.

Raiders rally

Coalition Forces raided several buildings in Yusifiyah Wednesday, capturing nine terrorists and killing one in an area known for enemy activity and safe houses. During the troops' initial search, several terrorists fled from one building to another to evade the assaulting force.



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Andrew D. Young

U.S. Marines with the 3rd Marine Regiment fill and move sandbags to fortify fighting positions at FOB Baghdadi.

Coalition Forces shot and killed one before he escaped and demanded the others exit peacefully.

Coalition Forces assaulted the hide-out and detained the remaining terrorists, shooting one. The injured terrorist was medically evacuated to a field hospital. All who complied were detained without incident.

The troops then searched the safe houses, discovering rifles, grenades,

material for improvised explosive devices and ammunition throughout the buildings.

Three days prior, Coalition Forces captured two terrorists in the area who were involved in hostage taking.

Two suspected insurgents were captured during a synchronized joint raid led by the Iraqi Army April 2.

See OPERATIONS, next page



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Francisco Olmeda

Sgt. Edmund Susman, attached to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, and an Iraqi Soldier from the 7th Iraqi Army Division, prepare to engage insurgents after taking small arms fire near a glass factory in Ramadi.

Operations

Assisting them were Soldiers with the 4th Infantry Division's 1/8th Combined Arms Battalion.

The raid was designed to capture insurgents known to be living in the area, prevent them from conducting further attacks on Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces, as well as to gather intelligence.

IED teamwork

Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division killed two insurgents and detained eight others April 1, after they spotted six of the terrorists placing an improvised explosive device near a road the Soldiers frequently travel.

Soldiers initially spotted eight men exit a suspicious truck stopped alongside the road. The men quickly dropped several artillery rounds before driving to a nearby village, where about 10 more men gathered around the truck. Within minutes, the truck drove off, and four insurgents started

walking toward the IED.

The four terrorists split into two teams. One team positioned themselves off the road where they could observe traffic and the IED, while the other team began laying wire through a field to the IED and assembled the pressure-switch bomb.

Leaders of 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment called in air support from 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment. With assistance from the Soldiers on the ground, the OH-58 Kiowa helicopters were able to identify and engage two of the insurgents in the field with machine gun fire and rockets. The helicopters were unable to spot the other two insurgents, so Soldiers fired artillery rounds at the targets. The explosions frightened one of the suspects, who began moving back to the village.

Soldiers drove to the village to

search for the suspects. They searched 10 structures, detaining eight suspected insurgents for questioning; three of the detainees tested positive for explosive residue.

While the Soldiers searched, another element from 1st Battalion secured the IED site until the explosive ordinance disposal unit could arrive.

Upon arrival, the EOD unit found two artillery rounds as part of an IED.

Hide and seek

Soldiers from the 1st Armored Division discovered a weapons cache near Tal Afar April 1.

After spotting three males loading mortar rounds in their car, the Soldiers engaged the men who fled the scene.

The Soldiers secured the site and discovered weapons and ordnance in the car and a bunker with mortar rounds, two rifles, and two artillery rounds.

"The helicopters were unable to spot the other two insurgents, so soldiers fired artillery rounds."

The workhorse of the military in Iraq

Story and photos by Sgt. Ryan Matson
101st Combat Aviation Brigade

You name it, Chief Warrant Officer Scott Moore, has probably flown it during his 14-year military career.

Now with the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade's Company B, 6th Battalion, he started with UH-1s in 1992, while serving in the Missouri National Guard. Moore has also flown Cobras, Apaches and Chinook helicopters.

"I envisioned myself as one of those guys who spent 20 years flying the same aircraft," he said. "I didn't plan on flying several types of helicopters, it just kind of worked out that way."

While he has loved flying the four different helicopters he has flown so far, he said the Chinook is a particular favorite.

"The Chinook is the most awesome airframe I've ever flown in my life," Moore said. "It's the best instrumented, the best total package, it virtually flies itself. It really is the nicest airframe to fly in the Army."

Moore affectionately refers to the Chinook as "the workhorse." It is capable of lifting a combined gross maximum weight of 50,000 pounds, and up to 26,000 pounds on the center hook of the three cargo hooks attached to the bottom of the helicopter. Each one of the blades on the two rotors of the \$23 million aircraft weigh 350 pounds and turn in opposite directions, powered by two engines, which each operate at 50 percent of their total potential power output. If a helicopter is to lose an engine, the other will operate at 100 percent capacity to compensate.

Besides its tremendous power and lifting capacity, the Chinook is also known for its troop and cargo hauling ability in the cabin area (inside the helicopter). The aircraft has seats for 32 people and more can be carried if necessary.

He said a good example of the lifting capability and spaciousness of the Chinook is the fact that a Humvee can be driven up the ramp into the cabin area of the helicopter, while another can be carried underneath it.



A Chinook helicopter from the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, sling loads fuel blivets to a forward armament and refueling point in Iraq

The History of the Chinook

Chinook helicopters were introduced in 1962 as the CH-47 Chinook, and models A, B and C were deployed in Vietnam. As the product of a modernization program, which included refurbishing existing CH-47s, the first CH-47Ds were delivered in 1982 and were produced until 1994. A central element in the Gulf War, they continue to be the standard for the U.S. Army in the global war against terrorism. Since its introduction 1,179 Chinooks have been built.



A Chinook helicopter sits along the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade flight line at COB Speicher.

Rebuilding Iraq

Projects that are shaping a nation



Beiji

A security project is complete along an oil pipeline connecting Beiji to Kirkuk, with concrete walls and guard towers now protecting some sites.

Sulaymaniyah

More than 50 miles of roads around Sulaymaniyah have been repaired, giving residents a smoother ride.



Hajiawa

A police station in Hajiawa has been renovated.

Baghdad

Two youth centers in the Baiya neighborhood of Baghdad have been renovated, running activities for more than 800 children.

Mansour

Renovations to the Civil Defense Headquarters in Mansour are complete. The compound was burned and looted following the invasion, but has been rebuilt, giving police and firefighters increased capability.

Baghdad

More than 700 students have a brighter future with two renovated schools in Baghdad.

Najaf

Two new substations will boost electricity to Najaf and parts of the Wassit province.



Amarah

Renovations to a fire station in Amarah are complete, increasing fire protection for the town.



A Soldier from the 3rd Iraqi Army Division searches a cement factory near Sinjar Wednesday.

Iraqi Army in Sinjar

**The 3rd IA Division's
3rd Brigade scours a Sinjar
cement plant for insurgents**

Photos can be found on www.mnf-iraq.com

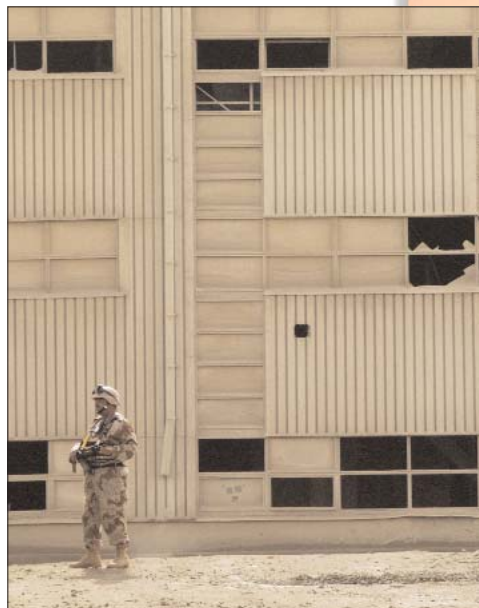
U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. Aaron Allmon



An Iraqi Soldier scans the rooftops at a Sinjar cement facility.



A 3rd Iraqi Army Division squad searches the grounds of a cement factory Wednesday.



After raiding a cement factory in Sinjar, an Iraqi Soldier stands guard.